

الفكرة الاستشراقية "عنف المسلمين" فى رواية "ظلال شجرة الرمان" للكاتب الباكستانى/البريطانى طارق على

رغدة طارق رجاء الدسوقى

إشراف: أ.د. عقيلة رمضان

ملخص البحث:

يتناول هذا البحث اتهام بعض المستشرقين للعرب و المسلمين بالعنف و الهمجية، فالعديد من كتابات هؤلاء المستشرقين أكدت علي الفروق الثقافية وعدم الاتفاق بين الشرق والغرب. ولأن الإسلام هو الدين السائد في الدول العربية، فلم يسلم من هذه الاتهامات المغرضة. وبعد أحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر قام الإعلام الغربي بتصوير العرب والمسلمين كإرهابيين و أصوليين ، وهذه الاعتقادات الخاطئة مبنية علي القوالب الجاهزة التي تصف العرب بهذه الصفات.

و قد قام إدوارد سعيد في كتابه "الإستشراق" بدراسة بعض نصوص المستشرقين و أكد أن الاستشراق يعد أحد الوسائل للسيطرة علي الشرق وتسهيل المهمة الاستعمارية. ويعد برنارد لويس من أهم المستشرقين الذين عارضهم إدوارد سعيد في كتاباته، فلويس يؤكد علي كره العرب و المسلمين للغرب لأن العرب -من وجهة نظره- اتخذوا الدين المسيحي عدواً يجب التخلص منه. و من ناحية أخري، تبني صامونيل هانتينجتون فكرة صراع الحضارات و أكد أنه عندما تلتقي ثقافات مختلفة لابد أن يكون هناك صراع، و هذا بدوره يؤدي إلي ظهور فكرة الآخر. وقد اعتبر هانتينجتون هذا الصراع نتيجة لعداء الدين الإسلامي للأديان الأخري.

و الهدف من هذا البحث هو دراسة اتهام المستشرقين للعرب بالعنف والوحشية من خلال تحليل رواية طارق علي "ظلال شجرة الرمان" – الرواية الأولي في رباعية الإسلام. و طارق علي كاتب باكستاني-بريطاني يعيش في لندن ويكتب باللغة الإنجليزية. وقد أكد علي أنه كتب رباعية الإسلام كي يدحض اتهامات المستشرقين للعرب. فمن خلال تحليل الرواية تهدف الباحثو إلي تقييم مدي نجاح طارق علي في الرد علي هذه الافتراءات. وبما أنه اختار فترة مهمة في تاريخ التقاء العرب و المسلمين بالغرب – سقوط غرناطه ١٤٩٢ – فقد تمت الاستعانة بالمراجع التاريخية التي تناولت تلك الحقبة التاريخية الهامة.

(*) معيدة بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية – كلية البنات – جامعة عين شمس

هـوامش البحث

1 The novels of this Quartet take place during four periods of contact and interaction between East and West. These periods are: the fall of Granada in 1492, the Crusades in 1099, the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1899, and the fall of Sicily in 1153.

2 All translations from Arabic are done by the researcher unless mentioned otherwise.

3 The Reconquista is the name of the movement with which the Spanish rulers reconquered Andalusia

4 The Capitulation Treaty is the treaty between Abu Abdallah Mohamed, the last Muslim ruler, and Ferdinand and Isabella. This is the surrender treaty of Granada.

5 Bibramla is the Spanish word for Bab al-Ramla, a famous square in Granada

6 Bonfire is the burning of books in Granada

7 Maristan is the Arabic word for mental asylum

8 For more details see Enan P. 298

9 Kashtalla is the Arabic word for Castile

10 Fez is present day Morocco

11 This paper is a part of an MA thesis in English Literature which examines other Orientalist stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims such as Arab immorality and licentiousness, and traces Tariq Ali's techniques in subverting this false notion.

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done through peaceful methods, never by the sword as claimed. He managed, through his representation of such historical facts to subvert false Orientalist accusations by showing his Western audience the stains that will always leave their tint in world history. He also struck a new note concerning the relations between Muslims and Jews in this period. Jews lived peacefully among Muslims in Granada, till both were murdered, forced to convert or expelled.

Thus, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, by Tariq Ali is a novel which stands as a counter argument against the intrinsic clash of civilizations proposed by Orientalists like Lewis and Huntington. In this novel, Ali dismantles the typical Orientalist binary opposition of 'Us', the civilized Europeans, versus 'Them', the barbaric and violent Arabs. He does this by highlighting a period in history in which such opposition does not apply. Other Orientalist notions have also been dealt with in Ali's Islam Quartet[11], yet as far as 'Muslim violence' is concerned, Ali's fiction, as this paper attempted to show, has revealed a strong challenge to Orientalism as an essentialist view of Muslim identity.

> It was like cold-blooded murder. They hesitated. The captain, enraged drew his sword and plunged it into the boy's heart. Yazid fell to the ground with crossed arms. He expired on the spot. There was a half-smile on his face as the blood, full of bubbles, gurgled out of his mouth. (Ali, *Shadows* 234)

Zuhayr returns and finds the horrifying events. He buries his father and brother. The next morning Zuhayr's hair turns white. He aged physically and psychologically and he would continue to fight till the last day of his life. He sends the cook to Fez[10] to live in his sister Hind's household. He would live to tell their story.

Ali's main aim in writing the *Islam Quartet* was studying different eras of contact between East and West, with the attempt to refute Orientalist false accusations of the Arab world and Islam. The novels have an intercontinental setting, spanning Asia, Africa and Europe. They also cover four major historical events in Arab/Western interaction. The focus of this paper was examining Ali's attempt at refuting Orientalist stereotypes with regards to the allegation of Arab violence and barbarity during the fall of Granada.

Historical references were consulted to check the truth of such fictional representation, and the following conclusions were reached: Ali was able to refute the Orientalist notion of "Arab barbarity" and "Islamicist violence and intolerance" by presenting scenes of Western violence in *Shadows*. He portrayed how Arabs contributed in enlightening Europe in the Middle Ages, and how this was

It took the army only two hours to eliminate the village. Ali presented the horrible image of the destruction and enumerated the calamities that befell the people there:

> All of the defenders lay dead. Weavers and rhetoricians, true believers and false prophets, men and women, they had fought together and died in view of each other. Juan the carpenter, Ibn Hasd and the old sceptic al-Zindiq had refused Umar's offer to hide in the granary. They too, for the first time in their lives, had wielded swords and perished in the massacre. (Ali, *Shadows* 232)

That was cold blooded murder. Spanish forces killed Muslims, Christians, Jews and even atheists. Moreover they killed helpless women and children. "The children who had been hidden in the baths, were decapitated or drowned depending on the mood of the soldiers involved" (Ali, *Shadows* 233)

Later, Yazid, the eight-year-old son of Umar, comes out from hiding, only to find his father's head on a spike and his mother burnt with the house. When the captain finds him, the traumatised Yazid gives one last remark which also proves that Muslims were far more tolerant with Christians when they conquered Andalusia. "I wish now that many centuries ago, we had treated you as you have treated us" (Ali, *Shadows* 234). Right after that he was brutally murdered:

> *They are determined to convert us and Cisneros has authorized the use of torture to aid this process. Of course many people submit to the pain, but it drives them mad. After converting they become desperate, walk into the churches and excrete on the altar, urinate in the holy font, smear the crucifixes and rush out laughing in the fashion of people who have lost their mind. Cisneros reacts with fury and so the whole cycle is repeated.* (Ali, *Shadows* 186)

That night he dreams that their village is destroyed and everyone is murdered even his youngest brother Yazid.

The last two chapters of the novel draw a horrifying image of Spanish brutality against Arabs. Ali draws the details of the fall of al-Hudayl which is a microcosm of Granada as a whole. These chapters show violence and barbarity against Muslim men, women and children, thus refuting Orientalist allegations of the opposite violence. This brutality is clear in the manner of the commander of the army who came to eradicate al-Hudayl. He tells his men that the King wants new maps of Spain and he ordered the demolition of al-Hudayl. Soon his orders were carried out and

> "[t]he houses had been set on fire Umar thought he heard the sounds of wailing women punctuated by the howling of dogs, but soon there was complete silence. The fires were blazing. Death was everywhere". (Ali, *Shadows* 229)

Moreover, Zuhayr, Umar's eldest son, recollects what happened in a city called al-Hama where some of his relatives lived. He explains how everyone had died and how "All the men, women and children had been massacred, and their bodies thrown to the dogs outside the city gates" (Ali, *Shadows* 148-149).

Ali keeps showing scenes of barbarity and recounts other forms of violence against Arabs in Granada. One character says:

> Inquisitors from Kashtalla[9] had been seen in the city. There had been inquiries as to whether the conversions which were taking place were genuine or not. Spies had been posted outside the homes of conversos to see whether they went to work on Fridays, how often they bathed, whether new-born boys were being circumcised and so on. There had been several incidents of soldiers insulting and even molesting Muslim women. (Ali, *Shadows* 160)

This is the exact opposite of Muslim peaceful and tolerant measures undertaken when they conquered Spain.

In the Andalusian contact zone, violence begets violence and as a response to constant Castilian cruelty and persecution, young Muslim men plan revenge. Zuhayr and his comrades set a plan to kill Cisneros in order to relieve Muslims from his persecution. Zuhayr sends a letter to his family telling them about the current situation in Granada and what resulted from the forced conversions:

celebrations and Muslim burials should be disallowed (Ali, *Shadows* 117).

Al Hudayl could not stay aloof from the rest of Andalusia as seeds of revolution invade the village. In a meeting after Friday prayers, Umar informed all the people of the options ahead of them. He explained that "The Muslims of Al Andalus were like a river which was being re-channelled under the stern gaze of the Inquisition" (Ali, *Shadows* 107). Arabs had three options before them: either to leave the country that their predecessors built, or to convert and preserve their possessions and live as infidels, or to fight for their religion and lands. "It was they who cleared the ground. It was they who found the water and planted the seed. It was they who saw the earth yield a rich harvest" (Ali, *Shadows* 109).

Ali gives the readers further examples of Cruelty against Arabs in Andalusia. Ibn Daud al-Misri reports what happened in Valencia and expresses his fear from a similar fate for Arabs n Granada.

> [the Inquisitors] will soon forbid us our language. Arabic will be banned on pain of death. They will not let us wear our clothes. There is talk that they will destroy every public bath in the country. They will prohibit our music, our wedding feasts, our religion. All this and more will fall on our heads in a few years' time. (Ali, *Shadows* 72-73)

> The surrender terms had promised the Believers, who comprised a majority of the citizenry, cultural and religious freedom once they recognized the suzerainty of the Castilian rulers. It was stated on paper and in the presence of witnesses that Gharnata's Muslims would not be persecuted or prevented from practising their religion, speaking and teaching Arabic or celebrating their festivals. (Ali, *Shadows* 19)

The treaty was broken and according to Enan in his book *The End of Andalusia and the History of the Moriscos*, the persecution of Muslims by the Reconquista was the exact opposite of Muslim tolerance when they conquered Andalusia. This fact challenges the Orientalist idea that Islam was spread by the sword or that Muslims persecuted Christians and Jews when they entered Spain[8].

To give further example of the brutality of Cisneros, Ali gives the readers a letter from Cisneros addressed to the Spanish Monarchs. This letter is very important in showing the injustice meted out to Muslims by priests and Monarchy. It also sheds light on Cisneros's twisted thinking and his adoption of negative stereotypes of Muslims. At the beginning he asks the Monarchies to send inquisitors to Granada "so that any person can come forward and report to us if he has heard or seen any other person, alive or dead, present or absent, say or act in a manner which is heretical, rash, obscene, scandalous or blasphemous" (Ali, *Shadows* 116). He suggests that Arabs should be forbidden from wearing their Arab clothes, speaking Arabic, and that their

Cisneros, with the help of the Inquisition believed that the only way to annihilate the Arabs was to destroy their culture and learning. "Oral traditions would survive for a while, till the inquisition plucked away the offending tongues" (Ali, *Shadows* 4).

Zahra, the great aunt of Umar, narrates a story of Spanish cruelty and narrow mindedness. In the night of the bonfire[6], the inmates of the maristan[7] were gathered to watch the burning of their culture. "You know they took all of us from the maristan to witness the bonfire of our culture. I thought then of this house and all the manuscripts in our library- Ibn Hazm, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina"(Ali, *Shadows* 53).

In the process of destroying Arab culture, Cisneros started by burning the books. Later, forced conversions started, even of the insane. Zahra's account of her life in the maristan sheds more light on Christian cruelty and violence against Muslims once the Reconquista took place. She gives her family an account of the forced conversions: "He had instructed his monks to start the forced conversions. What better place to choose than the maristan? They did not need threaten us, but they did" (Ali, *Shadows* 52).

Umar al Hudayl is faced with the dilemma of the forced conversion to save the life and the treasures of the family. He was one of the nobles who attended the signing of the treaty of Granada. He remembers the burning of the books and the Surrender Treaty:

man" (Ali, *Shadows* 64). In another conversation with Umar al-Hudayl he praises Arab tolerance "You attempted to bring civilization to the whole peninsula regardless of faith or creed. It was noble of you and now you must pay the price" (Ali, *Shadows* 68).

On the contrary to Arab tendency towards tolerance and peace, the fall of Andalusia is a testimony to Western violence. The events in *Shadows* take place in Andalusia after the Reconquista[3] and the initiation of the unjust, violent and barbaric Inquisition with Don Dessa and Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros as its two main inquisitors. The novel begins after the fall of Granada and the breach of the Capitulation treaty[4]. *Shadows* chronicles the suffering of Umar al-Hudayl's family prior to the fall of Granada. The events are narrated through three generations, and this sheds light on the deterioration of the Muslim Caliphate in Andalusia.

The opening scene shows Cardinal De Cisneros ordering the collection of all Arabic manuscripts and their compilation in Bibramla[5].

> The bulk of these were Arab manuals of medicine and astronomy. They represented the major advances in these and related sciences since the days of antiquity. Here was much of the material which had travelled from the peninsula of al- Andalus as well as Sicily to the rest of Europe and paved the way for the Renaissance. (Ali, *Shadows* 2)

Ali makes this clear in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (henceforth *Shadows*), where he offers the readers testimonies of Muslim tendency towards tolerance and peace.

Count Tendilla is one of the Spanish characters in *Shadows* who admits the superiority of Arabs and their tolerance when they conquered the peninsula. Tendilla, who held a high position as the governor of Granada, stands in sharp contrast with Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros who persecutes Arabs. Tendilla is a clear example of peaceful coexistence. He disapproves of both the Inquisition and Book Burning, and he says:

> Most of the people we call Moors are our own people. Just like you and me. They have ruled over a large portion of our peninsula. They did so without burning too many Bibles or tearing down all our churches or setting synagogues alight in order to build their mesquites. (Ali, *Shadows* 63)

Tendilla is considered a witness to Muslim tolerance when they conquered Andalusia. Later in a conversation with Cisneros, he accuses him of barbarity and savagery, thus saving Muslims from this unjust accusation through an act of subversion, whereby the victimizer becomes a victim of violence and barbarism. In Tendilla's account, it was the Spanish side who committed all the acts of violence: "Burning [Arab] books was a disgrace. A stain on our honour. Their manuals on science and medicine are without equal in the civilized world . . . It was an act of savagery,

work and encourages helping others. Revenge is only needed when one is defending one's country or honour, so it is not the "logical" Arab behaviour. By generalizing their "findings" Glidden and Hamady actually add to an already-existing Orientalist archive.

Since this paper aims at investigating the Orientalist notion that Arabs and Muslims are violent and barbaric, scenes of violence and barbarity will be studied in Tariq Ali's *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree,* the first novel of Ali's *Islam Quartet*[1]. Along with this study, historical references will be presented in an attempt to inspect and understand these scenes. Ali chose one of the main periods of East-West interaction in an attempt to fictionalize a well-known episode of History, namely that of the fall of the Muslim Caliphate in Andalusia in 1492.

The Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula started in the eighth century. Historical references document Muslim superiority, tolerance and their spreading of knowledge and learning. In his book *The History of Morocco and Al-Andalus*[2] Dr. Hassan Ahmad Mahmoud says:

> People's relation with their churches and priests remained the same. Moreover, the Arabs let the Christian sects continue their civil activity Muslims put an end to religious persecutions prevailing in the days of the Gothic reign; they let different sects survive fearlessly. Arguments were made by logic and reason. Torture and enforcement were out of the question. (63)

For Huntington, there was a fault line separating conflicting civilizations. He concluded by believing that "on both sides the interaction between Islam and the West is seen as a clash of civilizations" (32). Refuting this "theory", Said accused Huntington of lack of historical knowledge:

> Rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow. (Said, *Orientalism* xxix)

This paper particularly focuses on the Orientalist assumption of Arab tendency towards violence and barbarity and attempts to trace it in one of the novels of Tariq Ali's *Islam Quartet*. This accusation will therefore be elaborated as it appears in the works of different Orientalists such as Harold Glidden and Sania Hamady. Glidden gave an Orientalist analysis of Arab mind and personality where he concludes that an Arab can only "function" in conflicts since his culture and his religion glorify revenge (Said, *Shattered Myths* 91). In addition to Glidden, Sania Hamady adds that due to the lack of organization and collective work "the Arab lives in a hard and frustrating environment. He has little chance to develop his potentialities and define his position in society, hold little belief in progress and change, and finds salvation only in the hereafter" (Said, *Shattered Myths* 94). This is one of the negative assumptions and stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. Islam glorified collective

that must be annihilated completely. However, from a Muslim and Arab perspectives, Christianity is historically considered one of the three monotheistic religions along with Judaism, and its believers were given the title "Ahl Al kitab" which can be translated as "people of the holy book". Islam encouraged coexistence between these religions and there have always been tolerance and peaceful relations between them. Annihilating Christianity was never the aim of Islamic conquests. Later in his essay, he attributed Eastern fascination with the West to "the backwardness of the Easterners". On the contrary, critics and historians such as Michael Curtis have often stated Arab superiority in culture and learning in the time when Europe was in the grip of the Middle Ages.

Moreover, Huntington borrowed Lewis's term "The Clash of Civilizations" and tried to explain why "the Orient and the Occident clash". In an article which carries the same name, published in *The Foreign Affairs* in 1993, he maintains that "as people define their identity in ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an 'us' vs. 'them' relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion" (29). Typically, Huntington sees this 'othering' as the fault of the Islamic world, and he claims that "after World War II, the West in turn, began to retreat, the colonial empires disappeared; [while] Arab nationalism and then Islamic fundamentalism manifested themselves" (31), and the "re-Islamization of the Middle East" (26) took place. Said disagreed with this idea of the binary opposition because with the development of knowledge and learning and with the overlapping of culture, this distinction between "us" and "them" no longer becomes visible.

Said portrayed the relation of domination/ subordination in *Orientalism*. There are the Westerners and the Orientals, with the former always acting as the dominant in the relation, while the Orientals had "their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power" (Said, *Orientalism* 36). There are also terms ascribed to the Orientals and helped define them in the eyes of the West. "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said, *Orientalism* 40). Hence, the definition of the "Other" becomes a means for the definition of the "Self". This led The West to establish specialized schools for dealing with the Orient or in particular the Arab world and Islam. These schools produced a bulk of knowledge or a cultural archive, which was used throughout centuries by various Orientalists who wanted to study the East for different reasons, political, economical or colonial.

These Orientalist notions of the East were based on an assumed hatred of the West, which resulted in an ongoing strife between East and West. Two prominent examples of Orientalists and Middle East political "experts" are Bernard Lewis and Samuel P. Huntington. Both of them provide a negative stereotype of the East and Islam. They both believe that at first, the Orient was impressed and fascinated by the Occident, then this fascination was shattered, and turned into hatred and antagonism.

In his *The Roots of Muslim Rage* (1990), Lewis mistakenly claims that Islam regarded Christianity as a rival

always seen as inferior to the West, and this was a way of justifying Western imperialism. Edward Said called this type of study "Orientalism" in his famous book which carries the same name. Defined by Said, Orientalism is:

> A corporate institution for dealing with the Orient- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, ruling over it. In short, Orientalism is a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. (Said, *Orientalism* 3)

There has always been a discourse by which Orientalists were "able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively" (Said, *Orientalism* 3). So, through this Orientalist discourse, the West held itself superior to the Orient which served as an "Other". Also the terms "Us" vs. "Them" and "the Orient" vs. "the Occident" became widely used in referring to the relation between East and West.

This Orientalist discourse was based on the negative stereotypes of the Orient. Homi Bhabha speaks about stereotypes and how the colonizer uses them to legitimize his imperialist actions. Bhabha defines the stereotype as "that particular 'fixated' form of the colonial subject which *facilitates* colonial relations, and sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised" (78).

The Orientalist Notion of "Muslim Violence" in Tariq Ali's Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree

Raghda Tarek Ragaa El-Dessouky(*)

Under supervision of

Prof. Aqila Ramadan; Magda Hasabelanby, PhD

The publication of Edward Said's Orientalism came as a response to the writings of various Orientalists, some of whom were prejudiced in their presentation of Arab society. These Orientalist records stressed cultural gaps and inconsistencies between Orient and Occident. Moreover, because Islam is the main religion of the Orient, Orientalists have mistakenly seen it as "the latent danger" coming from the East. Therefore, travel books, anthologies, literature and even paintings were a way of knowing this East and having power over it. Moreover, after the events of September 11th, Western media presented and still present Arabs and Muslims as fundamentalists and bearded terrorists.

These misconceptions are based on former Orientalist4 stereotypes of the East who regarded Arabs as violent, barbaric, ignorant and immoral. The East was

(*) *Demonstrator at the Depart of English Language and Literature, Women"s College, Ain Shams University.*